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PREMILLENNIALISM

IN

RELATION TO REVELATIONS XX. : 1-10.

A Paper

READ BEFORE THE TORONTO MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION
ON 6TH FEBRUARY, 1882.

BY

WILLIAM MACLAREN,

PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, KNOX COLLEGE, TORONTO.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The following paper was read before a large meeting of the Toronto Ministerial Association, and was discussed with much interest at two successive meetings by the brethren. The interest which the topic excited has led me to think that a wider circle might profitably have their attention directed to it. Several of the brethren who heard the paper read, and others from a distance who had seen it noticed in the daily papers, have expressed a desire for its publication. I have therefore revised it, and added a few sentences to bring out my meaning more clearly. I have seen no cause, in any case, to modify the views originally expressed. The frank interchange of opinion which took place after the paper was read, gave every opportunity for brethren, who differed from me in sentiment, to point out what was unsatisfactory in the paper. But, I think, it must have been apparent, even to themselves, that nothing which seriously touched any of the positions, I have laid down, was adduced. I send forth these pages with increased confidence that they are fitted to aid in elucidating an important passage of God's Word, and that they are adapted to help enquirers in attaining more scriptural views, both of the time and of the object of Christ's Second Advent. The ground covered by this paper is very small, but it is of such vital moment, that it goes far to settle the whole discussion. For, if the literal interpretation of Rev. xx: 1-10 fails to teach, as I have endeavoured to show, what is essential as a foundation for the Premillennial theory, there are no other passages which can supply what is here lacking.

TORONTO, 10th March, 1882.

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Rev. xx: 1-10 and Premillennialism.

Premillennialism is bound up with the literal interpretation of this passage. This is the only place where the Scriptures even seem to speak of two resurrections, separated from each other by a lengthened period, and here alone is there reference to a reign of Christ with his saints, limited to a thousand years. But these points are so essential to the Premillennial theory that, as any one who reflects can perceive, there can be no Premillennialism without them.

Premillennialists, however, maintain that this passage teaches there shall be two distinct resurrections, separated from each other, by, at least, a millennium, and that the saints shall rise in the first resurrection and reign with Christ, on earth, for a thousand years. After that, the wicked shall be raised up and judged.

It is undeniable that these points are not definitely taught in any other portion of the Word of God, and it is not, we think, overstating the matter to say, that many other Scriptures seem, according to their natural sense, entirely inconsistent with the truth of these positions. It is claimed, however, by Premillennialists that two resurrections and the literal reign of Christ and his risen saints upon earth for a thousand years, are so distinctly revealed here that they must be accepted as facts, and must rule our interpretation of all prophecy, and also govern our views of many plain didactic portions of Scripture. Mr. Birks, speaking in reference to this passage, says, "It is enough that one clear statement should be given, before the inspired volume closed, which might serve as a key to all the other prophecies, and brighten into fuller and fuller evidence, when the time of the fulfilment should be drawing near." Birks, however, is not the only author of this class who regards Rev. xx: 1-10, as the key to interpret prophecy. Some time ago, there came into my hands a small tract, of a few pages, by an author who has written somewhat largely on prophecy. It is entitled "A Key to Open the

"Main Lock of Prophecy," and the first page is adorned with the representation of a key so large in proportion to the whole production, as to suggest the thought that, if this key were in a vigorous hand and did not happen to fit the wards of the lock, the lock might receive a terrible wrench. In glancing over this rather minute treatise, I soon discovered that the potent key which is to unlock the entire range of Old and New Testament prophecy is the passage to which I have ventured to call your attention, or rather, to speak more exactly, the Premillennial interpretation of it.

I could never see any reason why these verses should have such a commanding influence assigned to them in the interpretation of Scripture. It has always appeared to me a more natural procedure to interpret the utterances of a comparatively obscure, symbolic book by the plain statements of other portions of the Word of God, than to invert the process, and to interpret the *clear* by the *obscure*. Be this as it may, there can be no question that in the hands of Premillennialists, this key is made to work marvellous changes in the views which ordinary Christians gather from the plain teachings of other portions of the Bible. To illustrate: it has been the common faith of the church of Christ, from the beginning, that the Scriptures teach a *second personal* advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is evident to ordinary readers of the Bible, that Christ "shall come a *second time*, without sin unto salvation." And this exhausts their faith on the topic. But the Premillennialist, with the aid of this key, has discovered no less than *three* advents of Christ, yet future. He shall come a *second time* for his saints, a *third time*, *with* his saints, and a *fourth* time after the millennium, to judge the wicked from the great white throne. To affirm, as some Premillennialists do, that these three future Advents, demanded by their theory, are only different stages of "the whole return" of Christ to the earth, is to abuse language, in order to conceal the unscriptural features of the theory. If three Advents, each having appropriated to it a distinctive work, and separated by lengthened periods of diverse character, can be counted as one, then we can see no reason why the First and Second Advents of Christ should not be reckoned as different stages of the same coming of our Lord. It is to be feared that writers of the school to which we are adverting, often impose both on themselves and on their readers, by confounding together the three future advents involved in their theory. Rev. Dr. J. H. Brookes, in a paper which

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he contributes to "Premillennial Essays," quotes no less than *one hundred* texts to bring out, "the relation of the second coming of Christ to the teachings of the New Testament." In glancing over this somewhat formidable array of texts, I observed that only a small proportion of them had, according to this author's theory, any reference to Christ's *second* coming. Some refer to his *third* coming and some to the *fourth*, and many of them, can by no fair handling of their language, be made to refer to any future Advent of Christ, recognized by Premillennialism, e. g., 2 Thess. 1: 6-10, and Matt. xxv: 31-46.

To take another illustration of the potency of the key: it has been the common conviction of ordinary readers, that the Scriptures teach a *general resurrection* and a *general judgment* of the entire race at the Second Coming of Christ. This belief the ancient Church expressed in the article of the Creed, which declares that Christ "shall come to judge the quick and the dead." But Premillennialism with its key, will allow no general resurrection or general judgment in the ordinary acceptation of these terms. It provides a resurrection and a judgment for the righteous, or a portion of them, at Christ's *Second* Coming, and a resurrection and a judgment for the wicked at Christ's *fourth* Coming; but it has no resurrection or judgment for the myriads of the righteous who live and die during the Millennium. For there is no hint in this chapter of any resurrection or judgment taking place during the thousand years, and Premillennialists are careful to inform us that the resurrection and judgment which follow the Millennium, are confined to the *wicked dead*.

Whether these views are true or false is not the point at present before us, but the relation which they sustain to the supposed teaching of Rev. xx: 1-10. And we apprehend, that it scarcely admits of dispute, that it is usually when the readers of the Bible have been persuaded that that passage shuts them up to the acceptance of two literal resurrections, with a millennial reign of Christ and his risen saints on earth between, that they begin to search for confirmatory evidence in other portions of the Sacred Volume, and to interpret all Scripture in harmony with these imagined facts. It becomes very important therefore for us to ascertain the real meaning of this section of the Word, and its exact bearing upon Premillennialism. And in dealing with it, we should be specially careful to ascertain the precise teaching of the Spirit, and not permit any pre-

conceived theory to lead us either to add to, or take away from what God has revealed for our instruction.

There are two modes of interpreting this portion of Scripture, viz.: the *literal*, and the *figurative* or the *spiritual*. It will be necessary to glance at these in succession, in order to determine the bearing of each upon Premillennialism.

I. The *literal* interpretation.

This view is necessarily adopted by all Premillennialists, who see in these verses a prediction of two literal resurrections and of a corporeal reign of Christ and his risen saints upon earth. We shall not, at this stage, discuss the correctness of the literal interpretation. Let that remain an open question, or, if you prefer it, assume that the literal is the true interpretation. Does the passage so construed, teach what Premillennialists see in it? We are compelled to answer, No. Even when taken in the most literal fashion, it fails, in our judgment, to teach what is essential as a foundation for the Premillennial theory.

1. There is nothing in the text, or context to connect the resurrection here described, or the reign which it introduces with the *second Advent of Christ*. There is a great battle described in the previous chapter, in which Christ and his followers completely vanquish the beast and his followers; but this does not imply a personal Advent of Christ to our world. I am aware that many Premillennialists, led apparently by the necessities of their theory, assert that it does. Birks, in his "Four Prophetic Empires," referring to Rev. xix. 11-21, says, "A full and distinct narrative of the Lord's appearing from heaven is detailed by the prophet just *before* the Millennium, and forms its immediate introduction." Lord, in his "Exposition of the Apocalypse," takes the same view. He speaks freely of the descent of Christ to the earth, as set forth in this vision. The office of the horse on which he rides, "is simply to symbolize the descent of Christ to the earth as a king and to show that his Advent is visible." "The armies in heaven that follow him are of the same corporeal nature as he, manifestly, from their being seated on horses, and are *shown to be raised and glorified saints*."*—p. 509. These authors regard the battle as a physical conflict, and the slaughter as literal, even although it is expressly declared, v. 21, that "the rem-

* The italics are mine.—W. M.

nant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth" !!

Not to mention other objections to this remarkable interpretation, it is very marvellous that these intelligent Premillennialists did not perceive that, if the armies which followed Christ were redeemed men in the same corporeal nature as their Lord—were, in fact, *raised* and glorified saints, who had conquered in a great physical conflict, chap. xix. 11-21, they cannot possibly require to be raised from the dead literally, in chap. xx. 4-6. If these authors are correct, the resurrection of chap. xx. 4-6 must be a spiritual or figurative one, otherwise there has been discovered a resurrection which *precedes* the *first* resurrection!!! Other authors of this school, in their anxiety to find a personal Advent of Christ here to which they can link the first resurrection, have ventured to suggest that the angel spoken of, chap. xx. 1, is Christ. But surely it is unnecessary to refute this notion. For the intelligent student of the Apocalypse knows that Christ is constantly distinguished from the angels, who frequently play an important part in connection with the revelations given—vide chaps. xviii. 1 and xix. 10. A careful examination of this passage and its context, makes it evident that there is absolutely nothing to show that the resurrection spoken of takes place at the Second Coming of Christ.

If it is said that in other portions of Scripture the *resurrection* is associated with the Second Coming of Christ, we reply, Yes. The resurrection of *all* the dead, and the judgment of "the quick and the dead" are associated with Christ's glorious appearing; but that is a very different thing from the resurrection of a small portion of the human race, which is all that these words taken literally can teach. There were certain of the saints who rose from the dead in connection with the crucifixion of Christ (Matt. xxvii. 52, 53), but their resurrection was not associated with the Second Advent, and does not at all interfere with the general resurrection, at the last day.

The resurrection here described, whatever its nature, is not represented as a concomitant of Christ's Second Advent. This connection, however, must in some way be imported or assumed as a fact, before the passage can have ever an apparent bearing upon Premillennialism.

But when we turn to other portions of the New Testament, we discover that they plainly teach a universal resurrection of all who

are in their graves, and a general judgment of mankind, bad and good, as concomitants of Christ's Second Advent. I need only refer to a few passages : " Marvel not at this ; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."—John v : 28-29. No one reading these words would think that the resurrection of the righteous and of the wicked, which are both said to take place when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, can be separated by more than a thousand years. It is only when the teachings of Rev. xx, 1-10, are supposed to shut us up to this belief, that any one would so construe this language. " Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Rev. i, 6. Can any one, whose mind is not blinded by theory, imagine that this language does not require us to believe that the whole human race shall see Christ when, at his Second Advent, he cometh with clouds? But Premillennialism requires us to believe that when he cometh with clouds every eye shall not see him. His saints shall see him, when he comes for them, but his Advent may, perhaps, be unknown to the rest of mankind. They that pierced him, who have long been in their graves, shall slumber on, with all the wicked dead, and shall not see him until more than a thousand years have elapsed after his Second Advent. This language must receive a terrible wrench before it can be brought into harmony with the theory. See also 2 Tim., iv, 1 ; Rev. xx, 11-15 ; Matt. xxv, 31-46 ; Mark viii, 38. Compare Matt. x, 32-33 ; Rom. ii, 5-16 ; 2 Thes., i, 6-10 ; 2 Peter, iii : 7, 10 and 12. These plain texts, and many more, must be put upon the rack, and their language subjected to severe torture, in order that this *partial* resurrection may have found for it a connection with Christ's Second Coming, of which there is no hint in the text or its context.

Surely it would be, in every way, more respectful to the Word of God to allow this resurrection, whatever its nature, to stand as we find it here, entirely unconnected with Christ's Second Advent. I can see but one objection to this course : it would spoil the great key which is to unlock all the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments.

2. This passage, construed literally, does not teach a resurrec-

tion of *all the saints* who have died prior to the time indicated. It is clearly a martyr scene. "The souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands," may point to a somewhat numerous class; but by no fair construction can the words be made to include all "the dead in Christ." Some Premillennialists, even at the risk of endangering their theory, have candidly admitted that the *first* resurrection does not include all saints, but only the martyrs. The majority of them, however, see here what their theory demands, but what no literal interpretation of the language gives, viz., a resurrection of all saints. But when men assume that this occurrence takes place at the Second Coming of Christ, they appear to feel themselves at liberty to import into the words a range of meaning which is entirely foreign to them, and the martyrs are at once transformed into all "the dead in Christ."

3. There is nothing said here of the reign of the risen saints or martyrs with Christ *on earth*. That it is to be on earth is filled in from the imagination. It is said, "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." But where? The Apocalypse does not answer. We know that Christ has gone into heaven, and that the "heavens must receive him until the restitution of all things."—Acts iii, 21. If this is a literal reign of the risen saints, the natural inference would seem to be that they reign with Christ, where Christ now is. We have seen that there is no hint here, or in the context of the personal return of Christ to the earth.

I am free to admit, that I regard this earth as the scene of the millennial reign. But those who insist on a literal interpretation of the prophecy have no right to go beyond what is involved in the literal meaning of its terms. I infer that this reign will be on earth, because the binding and loosing of Satan are viewed evidently in relation to his *earthly activity*; and the reign of the saints is, in my view, inconceivable apart from the practical binding of Satan. But if the reign of the saints is regarded as something which is not really involved in the binding of Satan, I see nothing in the passage to indicate that the reign is to be on earth. Moses Stuart, who supposes that this passage teaches a literal resurrection of the martyrs, has pointed out, with great distinctness, that all we are, upon this supposition, required to believe is that the martyrs, as a special hon-

our and reward, are raised up and permitted to enter upon heavenly glory earlier than others. "As to the notion," he says, "of a *descent* to the earth of Christ and the martyrs, and their visible reign here, there is not a word in the text, nor even an implication, at least I can find none."—(Commentary, p. 708.)

While Premillennialism is bound up with the literal interpretation of this passage, it is quite evident that the literal interpretation is by no means bound up with Premillennialism. All that the most stringent literalism can deduce from the words, might have occurred any night since the prophecy was recorded, without the living inhabitants of the world being aware of the fact, and without any disturbance of the present order of the economy of grace. It is evident that the resurrection spoken of is not connected with the Second Advent of Christ, it does not include all the saints, and there is no reference to a visible reign of Christ upon earth.

II. We must now examine the *figurative* or *spiritual* interpretation. It is commended to us for acceptance by various considerations, which we can only sketch. Not only does this prophecy occur in a book which deals largely in symbolical and figurative representations, but we observe :

1. That the *opening verses* of the chapter prepare us for a figurative description. No one imagines that the abyss has a *door* and a *lock* which can be opened literally with a *key*. No one supposes that an evil spirit can be bound literally with a *chain*, such as one can carry in his hand. These are symbols which represent realities which do not belong to the material sphere. But, if the key, the chain, and the binding are figurative, why may not the resurrection be figurative also ?

We observe :

2. That the Scriptures frequently speak of a *revival* of the *Church*, or of the *Cause of God* under the figure of a resurrection. Isaiah, long before, could write : "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust ; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." chap. xxvi, 19. Hosea uses the same figure, chap. vi, 3, and Ezekiel, by his vision of the dry bones, chap. xxxvii, 10-14, must have made all the readers of the Old Testament familiar with this imagery. But the example which is, perhaps, most in point is

supplied by an earlier chapter of the Apocalypse itself. In chap. xi, 7-12, the death and resurrection of the *two witnesses* is described in language which demands a literal interpretation quite as clearly as Rev. xx, 1-10, yet the great majority of the best commentators, including many Premillennialists, like Elliott, do not believe that the literal death and subsequent resurrection of two individual witnesses is there foretold. Some explain it of the extinction, through persecution, of two lines of witnesses, and of their practical resurrection when Luther and his coadjutors appeared upon the stage. Moses Stuart is specially emphatic in rejecting the literal interpretation of the prophecy of the two witnesses. He writes: "That literally two and only two witnesses were to appear in these times of peculiar wickedness; that they were to be literally raised from the dead and to ascend into heaven, etc., we need not strive to disprove in commenting on such a book as the Apocalypse." Commentary, p. 599. It does seem rather strange that in commenting on the same book, a few chapters farther on, he should have found it necessary to believe that it teaches, in direct opposition to the apparent scope of Scripture, a literal resurrection of the martyrs a thousand years before the rest of mankind. This example of a figurative resurrection in the Apocalypse itself should prepare our minds for accepting it here.

We observe :

3. That the *sequence of thought* in the passage and its context is exactly what the figurative interpretation demands.

(1.) In the close of last chapter (xix, 11-21), we have brought before us a great battle between Christ and his followers, and the beast and his followers. But, however realistic the description of the contest, the battle, in which the armies of heaven and of earth meet, and in which the slaughter is effected by the sword which proceedeth out of Christ's mouth (v. 21), is not an ordinary battle, fought with carnal weapons. It is only in so far as antagonistic spiritual principles bring about, as they often do incidentally, a physical conflict, that the physical element can be recognized in this battle. In its distinctive character, it is a conflict between the powers of light and of darkness. The issue of the contest is that the beast and the false prophet are utterly overthrown and cast into the lake of fire, and their followers, who are here styled the *remnant*,

(οἱ λουτοι), are *slain* with the sword which proceedeth out of Christ's mouth. The cause which they espoused is *dead*. This is the state of matters when the twentieth chapter opens.

(2.) Then follows the *binding of Satan*, and his imprisonment in the abyss for a thousand years, in order that he may deceive the nations no more till the thousand years are finished, when he shall be loosed for a little season.

It is not necessary, to our present purpose, to decide, or to attempt to decide, the exact realities represented by this binding and imprisonment, which so effectually arrest the power of the tempter. Temptation may be rendered powerless over us, either when removed from us, or when we get such abundant grace and strength that we rise completely superior to its malign potency. Whether this binding is to be accomplished by the fiat of the Omnipotent placing some restraint on the great adversary, or by the bestowal of such abundant grace upon men that his temptations shall everywhere practically lose their power over them, the result will be substantially the same.

(3.) When Satan is thus bound, then the *martyrs rise and reign*.

When the foes of Christ were triumphant, they were put to death. Now, when the enemies of Christ have been overthrown and slain, and Satan put under restraint, they seem everywhere to come to life and triumph. This is a natural, we might say, almost a necessary sequence, if the resurrection is spiritual, or figurative, but not otherwise. For surely God can raise the dead in spiritual bodies, and render them forever secure whether Satan is bound, or not! But God cannot raise and render triumphant the cause which the martyrs sustained, without binding Satan practically. And, if the binding of Satan, in the sense of external restraint, is necessary to the highest success of the cause of God, then the binding according to the figurative interpretation, sustains to what follows the relation of a means to an end, whereas upon the other view it sustains to it no relation save that of *juxtaposition*.

But observe :

(4.) That *the rest of the dead* (οἱ λουτοι), live again at the end of the thousand years. These are the *remnant* of ch xix : 21. where the same phrase is used in the Greek. When this vision opened they were *dead*, but we are led to expect that they will again

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revive. For we are informed in verse 5, that "*the rest (οἱ λοιποὶ)* of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." We are led, therefore, to expect their reappearance at the close of the millennium. This is exactly what we find. Satan is loosed out of his prison, and goes forth to deceive the nations, and gradually a vast revolution is effected, and open, flagrant rebellion against God makes its appearance. The party which during the thousand years, had disappeared from view, once more comes into the ascendant. It *lives*, but its resuscitation is not dignified with the name of a *resurrection*. For wickedness, even when active, is a form of death. This vision, extending from the fourth verse to the end of the tenth, covers two distinct periods, one long and the other comparatively short, the one a reign of righteousness and the other an outbreak of ungodliness. It opens with the resurrection of the martyrs, and closes with the overthrow of the wicked, and with the final destruction of Satan who is cast into the lake of fire to be "tormented day and night for ever and ever," v. 10.

(5.) Then follows, in another vision, vs. 11-15, the *general resurrection*, where all the dead, the great and the small, stand before God, and *the general judgment*, where all mankind are judged according to their works. The books are opened and another book which is the book of life, that those written in it may receive their portion. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." v. 15. In chapters twenty-one and twenty-two, there is presented to us, in new visions, the final abode of the righteous, on which John expatiates more largely. It may be said that, if, in the closing vision of the twentieth chapter, we have a representation of the general judgment, of the righteous as well as of the wicked, why are not the rewards of the righteous set forth along with the doom of the ungodly? This objection overlooks what, at this stage, was presented to the eye of John in vision. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them." v. 11. Where then could the righteous be sent to enjoy their portion? The earth and the heaven have disappeared from the foreground of vision. The lake of fire, seen in the last vision, is still visible, but with this exception, every thing else on which the prophet's eye had rested, seems to have vanished. And now the entire prophetic panorama is filled with the great white throne and him who sits upon it, and the countless myriads of the dead, great and

small who stand in serried ranks before the Judge. It is not until the opening verse of the next chapter, that the prophetic panorama moves on, and it becomes possible to present to the eye the rewards of the righteous. Then John writes, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." And immediately after, he adds, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," and then throughout almost two entire chapters he expatiates on the glory of the city and the blessedness of its inhabitants.

It is instructive to notice that this view of the passage brings us to the exact order of events indicated by the teaching of our Lord in connection with the final judgment. According to Premillennianism, Christ, at his Second Advent, comes for his saints, and takes them out of the world, leaving the wicked behind. Then, after the Millennium, and after the righteous have, in some way not explained, been judged and blessed, all the wicked are raised up and judged by themselves from the great white throne. You will observe that in the parable of the wheat and the tares, our Lord reverses this order of events in the most express and definite terms, "Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather *first the tares*, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." Matt. xiii: 30. In the explanation of the parable given by our Lord, the same order is insisted upon. "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather *out of His Kingdom* all things that offend and do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. *Then* shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Matt. xiii: 41-43.

In that striking description of the last judgment in Matt. xxv: 31-46,* where all nations are represented as gathered simultaneously at Christ's bar, and separated according to their personal character,

*The attempts which Premillennianists have made to evade the force of the testimony of Matt. xxv: 31-46. to a *general judgment*, at the Second Coming of Christ, are among the saddest exhibitions which the history of Bible interpretation presents. The favorite mode of bringing this passage into harmony with the theory is to represent it as foretelling a judgment upon the *living* nations. But in what sense are the *living* nations to be judged? Is it to be a personal judgment upon each individual, according to his character and works? By no means. It would be just as difficult, upon the Premillennial theory, to find a place

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and rewarded according to their works, the eternal rewards meted out, are executed upon the righteous and the wicked in the same order. "And these shall go away into *everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal*" Matt. xxv : 46.

The order, therefore, to which we are conducted by the *figurative* interpretation of Rev. xx : 1-10, is precisely that foreshown by Christ himself. The wicked are *first* separated and cast into the lake of fire, and *then* "the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

In 2 Thess. i : 6-10, the apostle looking forward to the Second Advent of Christ, and the judgment then to be executed on the righteous and the wicked, arranges the events in the same order as our Lord has done in Matthew's Gospel. And Paul in this one passage repeats the fact of the punishment of the wicked, and the rewarding of the righteous, in the same order, as if to show that it was no fortuitous arrangement he had followed, while the bestowal both of the punishment and of the reward is linked in *time* with the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven at his Second Advent. It is only necessary to read the passage and mark the order of events as laid down by Paul, to recognize the value of this testimony : "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense, (1) tribulation to them that trouble you ; and (2) to you who are troubled rest with us ; *when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, (1.)* taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the

for such a judgment of the living nations, as for a judgment upon the entire race, at one grand assize. What then is meant by this judgment of the *living* nations ? It is something of the nature of national judgments. Those terrible visitations which God often sends upon masses of men, or communities, are of this order. Famine, pestilence and war are familiar examples.

What are the distinguishing features of *national* judgments ? (1.) They are *indiscriminate*. Within their sphere, they smite all classes of the community. The bad and the good are alike liable to suffer from them. (2.) Their punishments are *temporal*. Nations exist only in this world, and can be punished only in time. Nations have no future life, in which they can either enjoy rewards or suffer punishments. It seems almost incredible that any man can read Matt. xxv : 31-46 and not perceive that what is there described lacks every feature of a national judgment, and possesses the very opposite characteristics.

(1) It is *discriminating and personal*. Men are separated from each other according to their moral character, and their relation to Christ. Then they are rewarded according to their works. Each is dealt with personally.

(2.) The rewards and punishments meted out are *eternal*. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." To apply the language of this sublime description to mere national judgments is not to interpret, but to pervert Scripture.

presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; *when He shall come* (2) to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe," etc.

The order of events so definitely taught by Christ, and so distinctly followed by Paul, coinciding so remarkably with the order required by the figurative interpretation of Rev. xx : 1-10, should be some evidence for those who value God's word above theory, that we have found the real key to this important section of Scripture.

It is also apparent—

4. That this passage is, in various respects, inconsistent with the literal view of the first resurrection.

(1). The literal view makes the promise, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : on such the second death hath no power," v. 6, a mere truism. Surely it is not necessary to assure the readers of God's Word, that those raised up in spiritual and glorified bodies, shall not be cast into the lake of fire, and exposed to the pains of the second death, v. 14. But, if the first resurrection points to the possession by multitudes of a certain *character and spirit* in the present life, then we can discover a meaning in the promise, and see its parallel in the announcement, "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Rev. ii : 11.

(2). It makes the limitation of the reign of the saints with Christ to a *thousand years* seem unaccountable. Christ's kingdom is repeatedly declared to be an everlasting kingdom. "But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."—Dan. vii, 18. See also Is. vii, 7 ; Dan. ii, 44 ; Luke i, 32-33 ; Heb. i, 8. Why then limit their reign with Christ to a thousand years ? If this points to a period during which the Church enjoys marked prosperity, the limitation is easily understood ; but if it refers to the reign of the redeemed with Christ, considered in itself, we see no reason why they should be said to reign for a thousand years, when they shall reign with him through eternity. It has been said that the limitation has reference to the *persons* over whom they reign. The misfortune is that the passage says nothing of their reigning over any body. It affirms simply that "they reigned with Christ." I am aware it is sometimes said that the very word "reign" necessarily implies *persons* over whom the saints reign. This, however, indicates an imperfect acquaintance with the usage

of that word in the Holy Scriptures. When Paul, in Rom. v, 17, says, "Much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall *reign* in life by one, Jesus Christ," there is no implication of *persons* over whom they reign. See also I. Cor., iv, 8; Rev. xxii, 5.

(3). The opening of the book of life clearly indicates that those whose names are written in it are then to be made known; but what can be the meaning of this if a large portion of them have already been reigning with Christ visibly before men for more than a thousand years?

(4). The language of verse 4 is not, as we have seen, sufficiently comprehensive to include all "the dead in Christ," I. Thess., 4, 16; and the language of verses 12-13 is altogether too comprehensive to refer to the resurrection of only one class of men.

There is one *objection* to the figurative view which Premillennialists urge with great vehemence. We are told that if the first resurrection is figurative, so must be the second. In reply, we may say, (1) that we do not consider the conclusion at all alarming. We have seen that there is good reason to believe that the second resurrection, which is implied in the mention of a first, takes place immediately after the thousand years, when Satan is loosed out of his prison and goes forth to deceive the nations. Then the *remnant* who were slain (chap. xix, 21) evidently come to life again, animated with the same hatred to Christ and his cause, and acting the same part as of old. Premillennialists, like Dallas and Birks, try to find "the rest of the dead," (*οἱ λοιποὶ*), in the dead, great and small, who stand before the great white throne. But there is nothing in the language to lead us to imagine that only the *wicked* are included in the resurrection described in such comprehensive terms in vs. 12-13. This idea is not suggested by the words of inspiration, but by the exigencies of a theory. But we reply (2) that there is no solid foundation for the position that if the first resurrection is figurative, the second must be figurative also. This is a matter which can be decided only by the scope of the writer and the manner in which the subject is handled. I know of no rule of language to prevent an author from exchanging figurative for literal language in the course of a few sentences, and still less am I aware of any law of language to forbid a prophet presenting us with a figurative resurrection in one vision, and with a literal resurrection in another. Nor have we far to seek for an example of this transition from the figura-

tive to the literal, provided the first resurrection is accepted as literal. For surely no one, Birks and Lord to the contrary notwithstanding, can seriously believe that the slaughter of ch. xix, 21, which was effected by the sword which proceedeth out of Christ's mouth, is to be taken literally. But if we can pass from a figurative slaughter to a literal resurrection, we can pass with equal propriety from a figurative to a literal resurrection. All figurative language owes much of its force and beauty to our ability to pass consciously, at once, from the literal to the figurative, and *vice versa*. No one deems a familiar song less intelligible because it passes, in a single stanza, from John Brown's body, which lies mouldering in the ground, to his soul which goes marching on. And to draw an illustration from the writings of the same author who penned the Apocalypse, we find in John v, 25-29, that Christ speaks of two resurrections, but all interpreters are agreed that the first is *spiritual* or figurative, and the second *literal*. Our Lord, moreover, declares that we must be born again. The first birth was literal, but it does not follow, as Nicodemus imagined, that a man must enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born. This objection, therefore, need disturb no one.

We must now close our examination of this important section of God's Word. We have seen that the passage taken *literally* does not teach what is essential as a foundation for the Premillennial theory. The resurrection spoken of is not connected with Christ's Second Advent; it does not include all the saints; and the millennial reign is not said to be on earth.

We have seen that the *figurative* interpretation is commended to us by weighty considerations. Not only does the description occur in a book which is largely symbolic, but the opening statements of the chapter, prepare us for a figurative interpretation. The idea of a revival of God's church or cause, under the notion of a resurrection, was familiar to all the readers of the Old Testament, and is used in the *eleventh* chapter of this book very much as it is here. And the entire *sequence* of thought in the passage and its context, is that which the figurative or spiritual view demands, and the order of events, thus brought out, is that foreshown by Christ, and announced by the Apostle Paul. We have also seen that in many points the passage is inconsistent with the literal interpretation.

When therefore Premillennialism builds its vast prophetic system on the supposed literal teachings of this passage, it presents the appearance of an inverted pyramid. It rests on a very small point, and, as we have seen, an exceedingly uncertain one.

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